

The Native American  
Women's Health Education  
Resource Center

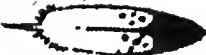


**Testicular Cancer:  
What Every Man  
Should Know**



Protect yourself by learning the  
facts and performing regular  
testicular self exams

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Testicular cancer is one of the most common cancers in men between the ages of 15 and 34. Accounting for 3% of all cancer deaths in this group and crossing different ethnic boundaries, testicular cancer represents one of the most curable cancers, if detected early and treated effectively.

### **What is Testicular Cancer?**

The testicles are a pair of smooth, oval-shaped male sex glands located behind the penis in a sack of skin called the scrotum. They are responsible for producing and storing sperm and male hormones involved in the development of secondary sex characteristics such as low voice, wide shoulders, and facial hair.

A tumor is an abnormal mass of tissue that forms when cells lose their ability to control their growth. Cancer is defined by the spread of these cells to other parts of the body.

When a tumor develops, it can be identified as benign or malignant. Benign tumors are not cancerous and usually do not pose any health threat. Malignant tumors are cancerous and can invade and destroy other healthy tissues. Approximately 95% of all testicular tumors are malignant, and therefore require immediate medical attention.





## High Risk Groups

The following groups have a greater incidence of testicular cancer:

- males who have an undescended or partially descended or descended testicle after 6 years of age
- males between the ages of 15-34
- males whose twin, brother, or other family member have had testicular cancer

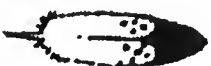
## Signs and Symptoms


Common indications include:

- small, hard, usually painless mass about the size of a pea on the front or side of the testicle
- slight enlargement in the affected testicle or change in its consistency
- dull ache in lower abdomen and groin, together with a sensation of dragging and heaviness
- pain or discomfort in testicle or groin

## Methods of Diagnosis

If you detect an abnormality, promptly schedule a physical examination with your doctor. A thorough check-up with special attention to the neck, breasts, abdomen, and groin region should be conducted. Blood and urine lab tests are common to ensure the symptoms are not a result of an






infection or other disorder. If cancer is suspected, surgical removal of the affected testicle is necessary to confirm the presence of a cancerous tumor and determine the cell type of the disease. This procedure is called an *inguinal orchiectomy*.

A variety of methods exist to determine the extent of the cancer. Discuss the following options with your physician:

- ultrasound studies
- chest and lymph node x-rays
- "tumor marker tracking" based on cancer hormone production

### **Treatment**

Depending on the stage of the cancer, the cell type of the disease, and your overall health, a physician can help you choose an effective method of treatment. Be sure to weigh each alternative, considering the often undesirable side effects.

- surgery: lymph node removal can cause sterility
  - radiation therapy (local treatment of high energy rays): diarrhea, nausea, vomiting
  - chemotherapy (injection into muscle or blood vessel, or oral dosage in pill form): hair loss, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and lower resistance to infections
- 





## Follow-up Care

The risk of recurrence is highest in the first two years. It is essential to have regular monthly physical examinations by your doctor and blood tests, if possible, to measure tumor marker levels for the first year. X-rays and scans are also helpful in detecting new masses.

## What You Can Do To Protect Yourself Against Cancer

For most common types, testicular cancer can be cured 95% of the time if detected early and treated immediately. Testicular self exams are easy to learn and do not take more than a few minutes each month.

Remember, the key is to look for any *changes* based on previous examinations and report your concerns to your physician.

1. Take a warm bath or shower to relax the scrotal skin. This makes it easier to find something unusual.
2. Roll each testicle between your thumb and fingers and feel for any abnormalities (especially the front and sides).
3. Check for fluid in the sac, or scrotum.



*A few minutes each month  
can make a dramatic difference!*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

*American Cancer Society:*  
1-800-ACS-2345

*Cancer Information Service:*  
1-800-4-CANCER

*Cancer Care Counseling Line:*  
1-800-813-HOPE

*The Native American  
Women's Health Education  
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